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Codeswitching and Consciousness in the European Periphery

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codeswitching and consciousness in the European periphery

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One of anthropology's contributions to current research in political economy is a focus on the symbolic aspects of power: how relations of domination are reproduced and sometimes resisted through local cultural practices. Such work explores in ethnographic detail the complex relationship between what Raymond Williams has called dominant and oppositional cultures (1973).¹ However, evidence for such practices has rarely come from sociolinguistics, even though the expression of power relationships in everyday talk, as well as the verbal construction of solidary relations that oppose them, has long been a central focus of sociolinguistic research. One aim of this paper is to illustrate that the deployment of linguistic variation in conversation can provide fresh evidence of such symbolic practices (see also Hill 1985; Woolard 1985). Patterns of choice among linguistic variants can be interpreted to reveal aspects of speakers' "consciousness": how they respond symbolically to class relations within the state, and how they understand their historic position and identity within regional economic systems structured around dependency and unequal development.

Placing strategies of language choice within such a systemic and political-economic framework also has important implications for forms of explanation in sociolinguistics. The study of language in social context has been a comparativist endeavor from its beginnings. In early work this was done through typologies for ways of speaking (Hymes 1964) or, relying on neoevolutionary social theory, through correlations between forms of linguistic diversity and societal complexity (Gumperz 1968; Fishman 1964). In contrast, and perhaps under the influence of generative linguistics, most current comparative studies that theorize the uses of linguistic diversity—pronouns, dialects, variables, honorifics, languages among bilinguals—have been attempts to postulate universals. For example, within studies of bilingual language choice, there are attempts to define universal linguistic constraints on language mixing (for example, Poplack 1980; Muyksen, diSciullo, and Singh 1985). Similarly, other works attempt to characterize codeswitching as one among many signaling devices that, used in conversation, display a single underlying logic in all communities (for example, Bell 1984; Brown and Levinson 1978; Giles and Smith 1979; Gumperz 1982; Scotton 1983). These studies disagree in detail, but all build on the linguistic expression of power and solidarity as opposing types of social relation-

This paper argues that the linguistic practices of bilingual ethnic groups reveal diverse forms of consciousness: they are symbolic responses to the ways in which the ethnic communities are differentially situated within regions of the world capitalist system. The analysis of codeswitching patterns in three European minorities (Italians in West Germany, Hungarians in Austria, and Germans in Romania) builds on current models of universals in language use, then goes on to develop another comparative strategy. It interprets the differences in codeswitching practices as diverse forms of resistance to symbolic domination within a historical and political-economic context. [sociolinguistics, political economy, codeswitching, Europe]

ships or values. Such work is indispensable for understanding the symbolic uses of linguistic diversity. However, it is equally important that the many fine-grained community studies of language alternation produced in recent years show a notable *diversity* in codeswitching patterns. The differences also require explanation. The second aim of this paper is to suggest a form of comparative analysis that, by linking the conversational uses of linguistic diversity to forms of consciousness in a political economic context, can complement the universalist approach, together explaining differences as well as similarities between communities.

Comparative analysis within a single region provides the strongest challenge for such a contextualized approach, and is made possible by several detailed case studies of language alternation among bilingual minorities in Central and Eastern Europe. The comparison presented here juxtaposes the codeswitching practices of three bilingual minorities: Italian-speakers in West Germany; Hungarian-speakers in Austria; and German-speakers in Transylvania, Romania. I show that the concurrent use of two languages is endowed by speakers with subtly different patterns and meanings in each of these communities. And these meanings are linked to the ways in which the communities are differently incorporated in contrasting political systems that are themselves differentially situated within the regional economy. Thus, although strategies of language choice are local conventions maintained by local social networks, they are nevertheless best understood as responses to a systemic context much wider than the local community.²

The language use of bilingual minorities has often been equated with that of dominated classes, not only in the universalist sociolinguistic models mentioned above, but also in broader theoretical discussions of symbolic domination. For instance, Bourdieu (1977) suggests that a standard dialect gains its legitimacy from state-sponsored institutions such as education, which inculcate the dialect's authority, imposing it even on speakers of dominated classes who never master it. This produces and reproduces an asymmetry between knowledge and evaluation of languages: a respect for forms one does not speak, a deprecation of one's own language. Such asymmetry is a linguistic form of what Bourdieu calls "symbolic domination." He includes bilingual minorities in this analysis. Woolard (1985) effectively challenges aspects of this view, arguing that such linguistic domination does not stand unopposed. The unauthorized vernacular forms continue to be used because they enact values of solidarity opposing the dominant value of status and individual mobility. As with the oppositional culture discussed by Williams, these vernacular linguistic forms attest to a palpable, if sometimes self-defeating, resistance to domination. Woolard's sociolinguistic examples demonstrate that the mechanisms underlying the maintenance of a minority language often match those supporting a persistent working-class vernacular. Indeed, this tension between dominant and oppositional language is essential to the contextualized analysis of linguistic minorities presented below. Yet, once again, the differences—this time between social class and linguistic minority—are also worthy of attention.

In contrast to world regions where language boundaries and political boundaries are not perceived to coincide in significant ways (see Hymes 1968), Europe's historical linguistic differences have been highly politicized since the end of the 18th century and have been used ideologically in the state-building efforts of elites. Thus in Europe, language groups are among those that view themselves as "nationality minorities" or ethnic groups.³ Although such ethnic groups can sometimes be conceptualized as underdeveloped "internal colonies" that are structurally equivalent to exploited classes (Hechter 1975), there are numerous counterexamples of ethnically mobilized regions that are highly developed economically (for example, Greenwood 1985). A broader perspective suggests that since ethnicity is a form of social organization distinct from class, the relationship of ethnic groups to class divisions and to power is historically contingent (Cole 1985). Making this distinction is significant for my purposes. The analysis below suggests that some linguistic differences among the three minority groups are due to their historically *different* class positions. Other contrasts in their codeswitching practices derive

from their links to coethnics in neighboring states. That is, political relations between states have differential effects on the linguistic evaluations and practices of these ethnic groups. Thus, while all three patterns of language choice are rightly viewed as “resistance” to the domination of state-authorized languages, they nevertheless take systematically different forms.

The contrasts between bilingual practices to be considered here are among those that appear widely in case studies, distinguishing communities other than just the ones I will discuss.⁴ Some bilingual populations allow very intimate mixing of linguistic systems within utterances or even clauses, but in others a strict separation or compartmentalization of codes is required. Code-switching within a single turn of talk is a common, even characteristic activity of some bilingual populations, while it is rare or nonexistent elsewhere. Relatively closed social networks are associated with compartmentalization of languages in some populations, but not in others. Finally, while the language authorized by the state is often used as a symbol of power and prestige within the bilingual group, this is not always true. Although these contrasts are widespread, it is not the historically and regionally specific interpretations I offer here that will be applicable to other populations, but rather the integrative form of the comparative analysis itself.

bases of comparison

In comparing the three European language groups, I rely on several detailed ethnographic and sociolinguistic reports of their repertoires, values, and codeswitching practices, each based on fieldwork conducted during the 1970s. These reports are not uniform in their definitions of such debated terms as codeswitching, mixing, transfer, borrowing, and interference. Nor are they all focused on language. However, the extensive participant observation on which they are based yields a wealth of examples that facilitates a reinterpretation of the material. Given this uniformity of method, and a relatively uniform approach to language alternation, it is unlikely that the differences in findings are due simply to methodological or conceptual differences between studies. In concert with the authors of these reports, I take as a point of departure Gumperz’s (1982) universalist characterization of codeswitching as a “contextualization cue”: Speakers create meaning in conversation by juxtaposing linguistic elements that they consider to be from separate language systems, each system linked with one category of people or one domain of activities. Attitudes toward the languages are, implicitly, evaluations of the groups, activities, and social relations of solidarity or power that they index. It is this overarching symbolic opposition that makes the choice of one language or the other an interpretable act that invites conversational inferences, much like Gricean implicatures, usually about the speakers’ relationship, identities, or conversational intentions.

A number of local similarities among the populations assures that they are appropriate units of comparison. The communities of each group are segregated residentially in compact sections of cities or villages that otherwise house mostly the majority population; while varying greatly in absolute size, each minority group forms a very small percentage of the country’s entire population (< 2 percent). In each of the three cases, the linguistic repertoires of the speakers include not just two historically separate languages, but also variants within each language. It is the deployment of these resources that varies across communities. One in each pair of languages is German (sometimes as the national language, sometimes as the minority language). All three bilingual groups have closer network ties of mutual aid, sociability, and kinship within the language group than with others.

The macrosociological basis of comparison is perhaps most important. Although differently related to the continent’s industrial “core,” all three groups are, or have been, populations of Europe’s economic periphery: southern Italy and the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy of eastern Europe. Their economic and political trajectories are partly a function of the European division of labor in which, historically, labor, agricultural products, and raw materials move to

regions of the industrial core, while manufactured products and wages move to the agrarian periphery, in a process of complementary and unequal development. "Core" and "periphery" are not only geographical designations, but characterize differentials in form of production, levels of growth, and forms of labor control. As this wording suggests, I am relying on a general dependency model of European development that has been variously elaborated by Wallerstein (for example, 1974), Berend and Ránki (1983), and others. Southern Italy's current dependent relation to West Germany, evidenced by its dearth of local industry and export of labor, continues a centuries-long pattern (Schneider and Schneider 1976). The structurally similar historical relations of dependency between Eastern and Western Europe were clearest before the eastern states entered the Soviet orbit after World War II (see Verdery 1983). But current analysts of European economic relations maintain that, despite impressive development after World War II, and the continuing role of the Soviet Union, many features of that earlier structural asymmetry are currently in force (Luke and Boggs 1982).

To provide a convincing link between the three examples, and to suggest the historical role of each in this European division of labor, I will use the late 19th century as a convenient frame, very roughly outlining the changing situation of each group up to the 1970s, when their linguistic strategies were observed. This historical sketch is necessary because for each group the immediate context of present linguistic strategies is not only their current political and economic position. It includes, as well, linguistic ideologies and policies supported by the state, disseminated by the media, and often in contrast to the group's view of its languages. These images and self-images must also form part of the analysis, and they are best understood, I believe, in the light of material relationships developing through time.

Italians in Germany

The linguistic repertoires of Italian-speaking youngsters in Konstanz, at the southwest corner of West Germany, consist of several varieties of German, learned in school, in the media and on the street, and Italian varieties situated along a continuum ranging from the native dialect of the family to "standard" forms heard on Swiss media and at Italian after-school classes, provided by the Italian state. The children's parents are labor migrants from southern Italy. For many of these young people, some of whom were born in West Germany, the language they know best and use most frequently with each other is the local dialect of German. Nevertheless, the use of Italian dialect is not only common with parents and other elders, but is also frequent among siblings and within the peer group. Indeed, some teenage networks, those with a relatively open structure, very often and deliberately use Italian (d'Angelo 1984:177–252). Switches to Italian dialect, along with other cues such as changes in rhythm, intonation, or volume, have regular effects on the interpretation of messages: these cues soften demands into requests, requests into pleading; accusations, threats, and reprimands into humorous teasing. Switching to Italian is also particularly frequent in personal narratives of everyday events. Thus, these uses *index* the intimate, familial context in which the language was first learned while themselves constituting and displaying the solidary connotation of Italian. German is opposed to Italian as the language of the state, of bosses at work, and of most education. But, at the same time, it is also used in intimate talk, since for many of these young people it is their own unmarked background code (diLuzio 1984).

However, the functions of switching are much more widespread than this, since it is a generalized contextualization cue used in the organization of conversation. Turn-taking, topical cohesion, tying, sequencing of activities, and repair can all be signaled by codeswitches. Thus, the interpretation of these switches does not rely directly on the somewhat ambiguous connotations of codes. Rather, the sequential location of a switch signals that something in the interaction has changed. Participants must then make inferences to interpret what has changed

and indicate their hypothesis and response through their own subsequent codeswitches. It seems that virtually any new conversational activity, that is, any new "footing," can be signaled by codeswitching, or redundantly by codeswitching and some other cue such as change of pitch, rhythm, or posture (Auer 1984).

Also, choice of language is constantly being negotiated, because every codeswitch puts into question the previously negotiated language of interaction. The negotiations are implicit as turns at talk are exchanged. Often, each speaker responds in his/her "preferred" language, until one capitulates and the language of the conversation is set, at least until the next codeswitch. Speakers appear to be quite sensitive to cues that display each others' language preferences, but there is a premium on equal mastery of both languages. It is the young people achieving this who win leadership positions in peer networks (d'Angelo 1984:181). Even without analyzing these codeswitching practices in any more detail, it is clear that the two languages are considerably enmeshed.

Historically, the same could be said about Italian labor migrants and German industry. The post-World War II Italian migrants in Konstanz represent the latest phase in a century-long pattern. As numerous analysts of intra-European migration have observed, the flow of cheap labor from the poorer south has served capitalist interests in the industrialized north, providing a major impetus to continued growth. It has also served the interests of elites in the peripheral southern regions who can thus control local unemployment and profit from their part in trade with the core, without changing the unequal structural relation between regions.

Since the German provinces started to industrialize and challenged Britain's economic hegemony at the end of the 19th century, German capital in manufacturing, mining, and agriculture has used the machinery of the state to recruit foreign labor from less developed agrarian regions, notably eastern and southern Europe. This influx of rotating, cheap labor was used largely for unskilled, hazardous work that had been abandoned by native workers. Migrant labor spared the state and employers the costs of reproducing the labor force. Migrants could also be expelled in times of economic crisis (Rhoades 1978). The post-World War II boom in West Germany made the expanding economy even more dependent on migrant labor, especially as the native birth rate dropped and native workers moved into higher level, skilled jobs. This created first a labor shortage, and then, with increased recruitment of foreigners into the lowest-paid, least desirable, unskilled jobs, a culturally and linguistically divided working class (Castles and Kosack 1983).

With the onset of economic stagnation in the early 1970s, and the shift of labor-intensive manufacturing to even cheaper labor in the Third World, the demand for the unskilled work provided by migrants declined. West Germany attempted to export unemployment, along with its social and political costs, by banning further immigration and encouraging repatriation. During the 1970s, attempts to extend legal rights and social welfare to the disenfranchised migrants were defeated by a very broad political coalition. This stance of the state is conventionally enunciated in the motto: The Federal Republic is not a country of immigration. And the academic and popular media of recent years have again turned their attention to race, national language, and national character as topics of consuming interest. However, they no longer stress the earlier notions of race superiority, but rather the inviolable distinctiveness of each culture. Accordingly, the conservative scholarly discussions, on which politicians and popular media draw, question the possibility of both assimilation and coexistence. They argue that it is in the best interests of *Ausländer* (foreigners) as well as Germans for the foreigners to return to their countries of origin, thereby assuring the maintenance of everyone's race, language, and culture (Castles 1984:191–212).

Ironically, however, the migrants have become an integral part of the German economy, rather less dispensable than the partisans of repatriation had hoped. The large infrastructure that was created to process, police, and control the over four million migrants, as well as the migrants' considerable labor contribution and their role as consumers, assure their place in the

economy. Yet the costs of social services, the rise in unemployment, and the consequent hostility of native workers and public opinion still argue for expulsion. Thus, West German policy is caught in a contradiction. This is especially clear in education: aiming to encourage *both* repatriation and some integration of migrants into German culture and society, but financed to do neither, it reproduces an unskilled and increasingly restless young labor force. Although several models for bilingual teaching of migrants' children exist, none shows notable educational success (Rist 1978:Part III). For the migrants and their children, facing disadvantage in German schools and discrimination at work, there are few possibilities under current economic conditions for gaining sufficient skills to achieve mobility out of the lowest levels of the working class (Castles and Kosack 1983:500–503).

For the Italian migrants (over 600,000), who are nationals of a country that is a member of the European Economic Community, forced repatriation has long been illegal. They are assured certain rights of travel and employment throughout the Community. As a result they have had an easier time unifying families and establishing somewhat diversified communities in inner cities than migrants from other countries. While movement of other nationals is now restricted, new Italian migrants and their children continue to enter West Germany. Those already there can and do move back and forth, going to Italy for vacations, marriage partners, occasional employment possibilities, retirement, or in hopes of starting businesses. Both parents and children attend to and encourage the children's competence in Italian as well as the home dialect. They are attempting, not always successfully, to assure a full stylistic range in both languages. This concern is linked in part to their ambiguous legal status as (euphemistically) "guests," or (more pejoratively) "foreigners" in Germany, and to hopes of return. The question of repatriation is a central theme among Italians, as it is in the nationwide German public debate. Attitudes toward return, along with evaluations and definitions of what traits and activities are characteristically "German" as opposed to "Italian" vary within each generation among the Italians of Konstanz and are subject to lively debate (diLuzio and Auer 1986). Even apparently casual arguments among migrant children about the relative merits of Fiats and Volkswagens inevitably carry a large symbolic load (see, d'Angelo 1984:231). Despite their special standing as EEC nationals, the Italians in Germany are not spared the xenophobia directed against migrants. In fact, they suffer dual hostility: known by various German pejoratives in West Germany (Keim 1984), they are labeled "i germani" when returning to southern Italy (Auer 1984:65).

Placing the bilingual practices of the young people in Konstanz into the context of these roughly sketched structural and ideological pressures sheds some light on their wider meaning. First, the languages and varieties have not settled into an unambiguous status hierarchy, not even for speakers of the youngest generation. Second, it is clear from the wealth of examples given by Auer (1984) that the ubiquitous negotiation about language-of-interaction has the effect of including in conversation, and hence into local peer groups, children of vastly different competences in the two languages. Since answering in Italian to a German request is a routine claim for the use of Italian, it allows children newly arrived from Italy to be deftly and smoothly included in conversation on the same terms as everyone else. They must eventually learn complex inferences about codeswitching, but their way is eased. What is more, frequent intra-turn switches, as are common in narratives, and switches between turns that repeat the semantic content of the previous turn (Auer 1984:90–91), have the effect of allowing speakers of very different competences in the two languages to follow, or acceptably construct, a story.

Thus, the constant negotiation renders a social effect: When, for political-economic reasons sketched above, neither Italian monolinguals in Italy, nor German monolinguals, welcome the integration of migrant children into their communities, the children's codeswitching practices have created a context striking for its structural potential to *include* newcomers. Simultaneously, in a context barring upward mobility, the symbolic strategy of these young people has clearly resisted *both* integration and repatriation. The youngsters value mastery of both languages. And they have used their dual linguistic resources to create a novel solution, a new set

of communicative conventions that often put them at a disadvantage in both German and Italian schools. While acceptance of integration might be signaled by complete language shift, and plans for repatriation by a strict maintenance of Italian at the expense of German, in fact, it is the systematic meshing of languages that appears to be increasing. Auer concludes that, for some speakers intra-turn switches are so frequent that

it becomes less and less relevant to speak of a language of interaction forming the background against which instances of alternation must be seen. Code-switching remains functional because of the contrastive effect it has, but this effect isn't any longer the consequence of calling into question or deviating from a base language [Auer 1984:84].

Students of European migration have noted that very little is known about the perceptions and consciousness of the newly settled migrant populations, particularly the important younger generation (Castles 1984:217). An analysis of these syncretic linguistic forms contributes to the current political-economic debate by showing one way in which the erstwhile migrants are producing distinct cultural practices.

Hungarian-speakers in Austria

The other two groups I want to consider here, Hungarians in Austria and Germans in the Transylvanian region of Romania, have had quite different historical links to the industrial capitalism of Europe's core. Both were part of the Habsburg Empire, later the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, until its dissolution after 1918. The monarchy submitted to German economic hegemony as Germany joined Britain, France, and the United States in the new multicentric core of the late 19th century. At that time, along with southern Italy, the northern regions of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy provided labor for German landlords and manufacturers. However, the major role of the monarchy in the realigned European division of labor was as an exporter of foodstuffs and importer of German processed goods. As a result, its industry was limited and the eastern portions of the monarchy, including parts of Hungary and Transylvania, remained agrarian, exporting grain produced on huge estates that were owned by aristocratic magnates and worked by former serfs, smallholders, and later rural proletarians (Berend and Ránki 1983).

The Hungarian-speakers of Oberwart were among Hungary's small holders. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries many of them also did seasonal labor on the large exporting estates that surrounded their holdings. Far from any industrial centers and proud of their ownership of land, they migrated relatively rarely. They lived, as now, surrounded by German-speaking villages. In 1921, as part of the peace treaties closing World War I, their section of western Hungary was transferred to Austria. The professional and administrative strata of Hungarians living in the territory fled to Hungary, leaving only the peasantry as a Hungarian-speaking minority of less than 10,000 in the new province of Burgenland within an overwhelmingly German-speaking state (Soós 1971).

Since that time, this most eastern and undeveloped of Austrian provinces has joined the rest of Austria as a satellite of West Germany and received international capital investment in light industry. Most importantly, the service and administrative sectors of Oberwart grew rapidly after World War II as the town became a major administrative and commercial center in the province. Although control of even local government passed into the hands of a German-speaking regional elite, Oberwart's Hungarian-speakers were well located to move into many new and lucrative industrial, and later also administrative and clerical, niches with little competition. Such employment provided the first large-scale economic alternative to the marginal situation of small-scale agriculture. It was also the first major incentive for extended, daily use of German, since the language was required in industry, commerce, and administration. Thus, whereas in the 19th century and until the early 1930s peasants had supplemented their incomes

by sending family members to seasonal work either on large estates or for local German merchants, since the 1960s their own holdings have become merely a supplement to more remunerative and prestigious occupations.

Upward mobility continued as other workers, often foreign labor migrants, replaced “native” workers, such as the Oberwarters, in industry. Indeed, the experience of mobility in Oberwart has been so striking that even during the current period of stagnation and unemployment, the conventional wisdom is that those who work hard enough will prosper. Accompanying this occupational mobility has been a decrease in group endogamy. Since the 1960s the rate of marriage to German monolinguals from neighboring villages has risen sharply, although German monolinguals often show hostility to Hungarian accents and the public use of Hungarian (Gal 1979:23–62).

This hostility is, I believe, rooted in public discourse and the implicit policies of the national and provincial governments. If Italian migrants’ linguistic strategies are to be seen against such a backdrop, so must those of Hungarian-speakers in Austria. Despite legal guarantees, the state has lent only minimal support to Hungarian language education, from the close of the Hungarian elementary school in the 1950s until very recent reforms.⁵ However, there are more widespread and subtle factors as well. One of these is surely the image of Hungary constructed in textbooks, at public ceremonies, and in widely consumed commemorative publications celebrating Burgenland. Having existed neither geographically nor administratively before 1921, Burgenland has had to be invented. Usually the province’s castles, along with its religious and linguistic diversity, are evoked to define its identity. But the effort has also involved a historical component. Popular accounts scant the territory’s history as Western Hungary (in favor of Roman relics) while linking former poverty with oppressive Hungarian rule, and current prosperity with Austrian good sense (see, for example, Rosnak 1974). This dovetails with the image of Hungary constructed by Burgenlanders from the media and from their own tourist experiences since the mid-1970s. The ominous and omnipresent barbed-wire border with Hungary, closed for several decades, and the relative underdevelopment of Hungary, are understood in accordance with the local version of Cold War rhetoric as direct results of communism and collectivization. Often citing these images, young Hungarian-speakers outspokenly and unambiguously identify themselves as citizens of the Austrian state, distancing themselves equally from Hungary, communism, and the past.

Language use among Hungarian-speakers in Austria provides some instructive contrasts to the patterns of Italians in West Germany. Their repertoires also contain local and more educated versions of German and for older speakers a form of standard Hungarian along with the distinctive local dialect (Imre 1973). Yet the Hungarian-speakers in Austria, although bilingual for several centuries, keep their languages clearly separate, using one language to one set of interlocutors, the other language to others, even when all speakers are bilinguals. Codeswitching within single narratives or short exchanges does occur, but it is circumscribed: only some people do it, and only some of the time. Elders use only Hungarian with all bilinguals, saving their considerable competence in German for exchanges with German monolinguals. Speakers under 35, who have been the prime beneficiaries of the postwar changes and have entered nonagricultural employment, use only German to each other even at home. They restrict use of Hungarian to interactions with the oldest generation (Gal 1979:Ch. 3–4).

Even for the generation in-between, which does the most codeswitching, this strategy is limited in frequency and in conversational function. In the Italian case, if one can identify an unmarked code against which switches occur, it is often the majority’s language. In contrast, switches to Hungarian within German conversations do not occur at all in Oberwart. Rather, German monolingual norms of pronunciation and usage are highly prized and avidly imitated by young bilinguals. Most switches, then, are German forms in basically Hungarian conversations. These vary, of course, in their local interpretations, but most often involve claims to authority or expertise. Alternatively, they are a means of accomplishing conversational conflict,

expressing escalation of distance and thus implying anger. However, not any change in “footing” is routinely accomplished by codeswitching, and little negotiation of language occurs. Rather, such switching is fairly closely tied to the symbolic connotations of the two languages.

For the middle and younger generations, who have experienced postwar mobility and have had only German education, these connotations are evident in discussions and interviews. Hungarian is demeaned and devalued as simply the peasant language of parents, grandparents, and the local church. It is often labeled economically useless. One person echoed many in saying “You can’t go far with Hungarian,” alluding simultaneously to several images of economic and political undesirability. In contrast, German is valued and respected as the language of power and mobility—higher status in work, business, and education—and the Austrian state of which, as I have noted, young Oberwarters consider themselves model citizens (Gal 1979:Ch. 2). Linguistic domination is an accurate description of this asymmetry.

But the authority of German does not go unchallenged. Although a decrease in the number of young people using Hungarian and a restriction in its contexts of use is incontrovertibly occurring, there are weaker but continuing pressures, exercised by the older generations on the younger and by peasant networks on their members, for choice of Hungarian in the bilingual neighborhood (Gal 1979:131–152). Failure to use Hungarian locally has become costly: ridicule and accusations of social pretension are frequently the sanctions for those young people who totally reject Hungarian. And this can have material consequences. Conformity to the social and linguistic norms of local networks helps assure the support of these networks in mutual aid, labor exchange, and the transactions of the informal economy. Grandparents are more likely to provide timely access to family land and assistance in working it when deference to them is properly shown—in Hungarian. Despite Oberwarters’ confidence in continued prosperity, these factors have gained added importance in recent years as the postwar boom has been followed by periods of contraction.

The internal experience of this tension between the authority of German and local resistance to it is voiced in subtle aspects of discourse, such as the unintended irony in the comment of a young railroad worker who, at a family gathering, insisted, in Hungarian, that in Oberwart only the old peasants speak Hungarian (Gal 1979:123). Most significantly, this tension is inscribed in the internal structure of Hungarian, as it is now spoken by young people. They have made Hungarian both symbolically and structurally into a language of solidarity. The range of use of the language is restricted to close, local relationships. Thus, signaling distance or formality in Hungarian appears to be incongruous: The Hungarian phonological variants (local versus standard), which are used by older people to distinguish formal relationships and events, are known by young people, but they are used unsystematically, not as markers of formality, but in free variation with respect to the formality of events and relationships (Gal 1984). In short, the Hungarian spoken by young people is stylistically restricted. A related development is the efflorescence of lexical innovation among the young people. Speaking the language considerably less than other generations, they have failed to acquire some cognitively complex word-formation devices. Nevertheless, they are constrained to use Hungarian with elders. The result of this contradiction is that young speakers rely more heavily on the word-formation devices they *do* control and so achieve expressivity through a profusion of neologisms. These are usually comprehensible to elders, but make their Hungarian considerably different from the more standard grammar of other generations or of monolingual Hungarians (Gal, in press).

Thus, the symbolic enterprise of the youngest generation can be read as part of an intracommunity conflict often played out between generations. It results both in the continued use of Hungarian and also in its reduction to a distinctly local language. This is a self-reinforcing process in which the solidarity function of Hungarian affects its structure, which in turn makes the language less fit to use for nonsolidary interactions. Indeed, young people’s usage has so diverged from standard that, were current commercial possibilities with Hungary to expand con-

siderably (not unlikely), their version of this supposedly “useless” language would indeed be of questionable use.

German-speakers in Romania

As a long-settled, formerly agricultural population that has been drawn into industry and closer contact with the national majority since World War II, the German-speakers of Romania seem to have much in common with the Hungarians of Austria. Yet their codeswitching practices contrast instructively.⁶

Within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy of the late 19th century, Transylvania was doubly peripheralized. It was an agricultural region within Hungary just as Hungary itself won autonomy within the monarchy and attempted to industrialize. In Transylvania, Hungarian magnates owned huge estates, which were worked by the majority population: impoverished and disenfranchised Romanian sharecroppers. Here, as in other agricultural peripheries, the agrarian elite profited from the region’s underdevelopment and so encouraged the growth not of a native middle class whose interests might lie in a more diversified economy, but rather of nonnative merchants and small industrialists—in Transylvania these were largely the German Saxons—who could be relied upon to have commercial ties to the core. Germans were not all merchants; they were also free peasants who benefited from ties to urban coethnics. In addition to their advantageous economic position, the Saxons of Transylvania held important legal and religious privileges that guaranteed considerable political and cultural autonomy (Verdery 1983).

All of these privileges ended with the breakup of the monarchy after World War I. The Romanians replaced the Hungarians as the dominant group in control of the new Romanian state that now included Transylvania. They continued a program of vociferous Romanian nationalism. But until World War II and the advent of socialism, the Germans retained their economic advantages. These advantages were finally destroyed when reparations demanded of the Germans after the war led to the expropriation of German land and to deportation of many Germans to labor in the Soviet Union. The loss of their land forced them to enter socialist industry and agriculture some years before collectivization forced Romanians to do the same. This early entry gave them seniority in the working class, and thus higher pensions than Romanians of the same generation. Nevertheless, in marked contrast to the Italians in Konstanz and the Hungarians of Burgenland, their postwar movement into Romanian industry was felt by the Germans to be downward mobility from their previous status as relatively wealthy and independent farmers.

The fate of Romanian industry has fluctuated considerably since the war. The Romanian state’s explicit goal of avoiding dependence on both the Soviet Union and the capitalist West has been pursued through rapid industrialization but with sharply varying success. Austerity measures, shortages, and a ban on contraception, resulting in part from this policy and also from government mismanagement, have provoked resentment among all sections of the population. But for the minorities in Transylvania a further source of discontent during and since the 1970s has been the increasingly shrill public assertion of Romanian nationalism, often in historical terms that exclude and alienate the national minorities (Verdery 1983:69–70).

As with the Hungarian-speakers in Austria, the German-speakers in Romania have been multilingual for centuries. For instance, in the village of Vingard, which has been described in sociolinguistic detail by McClure and McClure (in press), the repertoire includes two varieties of Transylvanian German (Saxon), a rural one which is their first language, a “we-code” of solidarity, and an urban form, associated with a nearby city in which Saxons make up a sizable proportion of the population. It also includes German learned in school and used at church, and Romanian, which is the national language. Some older speakers also learned Hungarian in school, a reminder of Hungarian rule of Transylvania before World War I.

Choice among codes is determined almost entirely by the identity of the participants in the interaction. If all are Vingard Saxons, then Vingard Saxon is used; with Saxons from the city, or from other dialect areas, urban Saxon or German is used. Romanian is used with Romanians or in the presence of Romanians, although Romanians complain that even in their presence Germans sometimes speak German and exclude them. In contrast, among Hungarian-speakers in Oberwart, the switch to German in the presence of German monolinguals is now nearly universal. Even more interesting for comparative purposes is that in Transylvania switching within interactions or within turns at talk seems much rarer than in Oberwart. What is particularly conspicuous by its absence is alternation to produce interactional effects, such as authoritativeness, or the change in force of speech acts. In particular, Romanian is never used within conversations with German-speakers. McClure and McClure make this point by noting

Although one can identify Romanian and Hungarian as "they codes," Vingard Saxon as the "we code" and [urban] Saxon and German as intermediate forms ("we codes" in contrast to Romanian and Hungarian, "they codes" in contrast to Vingard Saxon), this wealth of resources was apparently not manipulated to convey metaphorical meaning [McClure and McClure in press:19].

While a sprinkling of German words or phrases into a Saxon exchange can be used to claim education, or sophistication, Romanian is never used to make this claim, even though it has been the language of the state for more than 60 years. This is a striking contrast with the Hungarian case, where after the same length of time, words and phrases from the language of the state have exactly the effect of claiming authority.

Another contrast is that in Transylvania young German-speakers continue to use German with each other, although, even more than in Oberwart, postwar changes have destroyed material differences between ethnic groups and have brought them together in industry, on collective farms, and recently in marriages as well. Yet, again in contrast to Oberwart, even the children of mixed marriages between Romanians and Germans often learn German, sometimes through the considerable expense and effort of their parents. In the interests of assuring children's knowledge of a full stylistic range, including German as well as Saxon, parents sometimes send them to live with kin, or attempt to move the family to an area of higher German concentration where German schools are available (MacArthur 1976; Verdery 1985).

The key to these contrasts is the historical place of Germans in Transylvania and the present significance of their ethnic identity in a wider European context. Until after World War II, even in villages where Germans and Romanians farmed side by side, they did it with different resources and different economic rationalities. Verdery's (1983) historical reconstruction of interethnic relations before World War II shows clearly that Germans constituted the wealthy, free, cash- and market-oriented peasants in Transylvanian villages, taking advantage of links to German merchants. Romanians, in contrast, were sharecroppers who often had to live by their wits, having acquired their small holdings only after the dissolution of the monarchy. Romanians worked as servants on German farms or occasionally as sharecroppers for Germans. In short, the social system, enacted in the day-to-day experiences of villagers, linked German identity with favorable class and status characteristics superior to that of Romanians, despite the support of the new Romanian state.

Germans in socialist Romania have retained a sense of separate identity into the 1970s, but the economic relations and collective organization that earlier mobilized them are no longer in force. Yet the stereotypes that grew out of those relations, and through which Germans and Romanians perceived each other, continue to color interethnic relations. In these mutual stereotypes each group disapproves of the other in certain respects, but both Romanians and Germans agree that the Germans have been more "civilized," efficient, hardworking, and stern than Romanians, who are acknowledged to have come up in the world but are still seen by Germans with a certain contempt as somewhat undisciplined, given to good times and cunning. And these long-standing perceptions have a newer reinforcement. Germans in Transylvania identify with a "free" Germany as against an "unfree" communist Romanian state whose

inefficiencies and mistakes reconfirm their sense that things Romanian are basically second-rate (Verdery, personal communication 1987). Even the move to Romanian industry was, for them, a step down.

Such past evaluations and mutual ethnic images go a long way toward explaining why switching to Romanian within a German conversation was very rarely observed by McClure and McClure, and certainly not as a claim to status or authority. On the contrary, Verdery reports two incidents from another village that suggest a quite different route by which Romanian might be entering German usage. In an all-German social event German-speakers switched to Romanian to tell jokes, explaining that German just doesn't have many good jokes. "And although Germans rarely display drunkenness, a few have been observed brawling tipsily in Romanian" (Verdery 1983:65). The new uses of Romanian provide little evidence of effective linguistic domination. They emerge in activities devalued and defined as Romanian by long-standing ethnic stereotypes.⁷

But the active maintenance of the German language and its value, in the face of the diminishing significance of ethnic differences, has another source as well. Although Romanian policy recognizes the cultural, though not political, rights of ethnic minorities, and provides bilingual education where numbers require, it is committed, in accordance with Marxist-Leninist theory, to the elimination of ethnic differences in socialism. It is ironic, then, that the major incentive for maintenance of German comes from Romania's own foreign policy. Since 1966, in response to pressure from West Germany and lately the United States, Romania has allowed the emigration of a limited number of ethnic Germans to West Germany under the rubric of family reunification. The incentive for Romania is improved trade relations with the Western powers. For the Germans of Romania this makes their language the potential ticket to a considerably higher standard of living. True to the Europe-wide conception, it is language that provides the proof that one is German and thus eligible to emigrate to join relatives in the West. However limited the actual chances of emigration, the recent economic austerity in Romania and the increasing stridency of Romanian nationalism enhance the value of the German language, as a way of leaving the option of migration open for the next generation. Indeed, this possibility creates internal tensions in villages. Some families opt for education and mobility within Romania, but others discourage children's technical education in Romanian schools and thus bar their upward mobility within Romania, partly to decrease the state's claim on the child and perhaps thereby increase the chances of emigration (MacArthur 1976). Yet emigration has its own contradictions: it is an individualistic strategy that decimates the ethnic collectivity that creates the possibility of emigration (Verdery 1985).

Thus, for both the state and the nationality group, it is the continued uneven development of Eastern and Western Europe that makes such an agreement desirable. It gives the state access to hard currency and the ethnic group (limited) access to material advantages that they have historically identified as part of their ethnicity. It is in this international arena that the linguistic strategy of the Germans gains its current meaning. The German language has a new use and a new basis for positive evaluation.

conclusions

Starting with the universalist thesis that codeswitching in conversation is always a systematic and socially meaningful use of contrasting linguistic resources, my goal has been to understand the subtle but symbolically significant *differences* in codeswitching practices between apparently similar populations in a single region. The three brief examples include only language/ethnic groups that, for different reasons, are at this historical moment only weakly organized, with relatively little elite activity aimed at voicing and shaping group consciousness. The Hungarians and Germans are in decline, the Italians only now emerging. Insurgent groups that have

gained or are currently struggling for political strength and whose elites are conducting active public discussion of language and identity would make important contrasting cases. But for any language groups facing a dominant culture that imposes external images of them, linguistic practices and evaluations are among the readily available sources of information about consciousness. They reveal implicit self-perceptions and unspoken assessments of the ethnic "other." Arguing that the three examples show sufficient diversity of codeswitching practices to require explanation, I initially linked these differences to the groups' changing positions in the European political and economic system.

A first effect of this approach, in contrast to community studies, is the attention it turns to international linkages. The local evaluations of languages and the symbolic constructions speakers form with them are affected by factors far from the local community, at levels of organization involving the state and often the larger interstate system. This is most obviously true for the Germans of Transylvania, since their language-linked emigration affects the value of German and depends on international trade agreements. Similarly, among the Italians of Konstanztz, the EEC agreements affect linguistic practice since they have an important influence, through newcomers and returnees, on the linguistic composition of the group.⁸

A more important implication of this perspective for sociolinguistics, as for any comparative endeavor, is the parsimony it offers: a single process, such as the imposition of a state language, can have different effects, over time, in communities situated differently in a single regional economic and political system. Several and sometimes divergent developments thus emerge as parts of a single process. In this view, the effort to find variables—for instance, industrialization, urbanization, economic development, "group vitality"—that will everywhere produce the same effects on minority language use or language evaluation, misses the mark. The same criticism applies to the numerous typologies of "language situations" based on ahistoric and decontextualized combinations of such variables.

Divergent evaluations of state languages provide an illustration of this logic. A systemic view highlights the fact that the state language is not uniformly a language of authority and symbolic power for all minority groups, even if that language is consistently supported by institutions such as schools, police, and government agencies. Rather, acceptance of the authority and prestige of the state language depends on the political-economic position of the minority group with respect to the state and the regional economy. For example, Romanian has been the language of Transylvania for over 60 years, but it is largely excluded from the intragroup speech of Germans. This legally privileged group was also economically dominant before World War II within a relatively underdeveloped state in the European periphery. Use of Romanian at work has come about through the Germans' downward mobility. Germans incorporate Romanian, if at all, only in relatively devalued speech events. Using a spatial metaphor for the status-ranking of speech events, the two languages are either entirely compartmentalized, maintaining separate sources of prestige, or Romanian is seeping into German conversations most unprestigiously, from the bottom. The case of Burgenland is an enlightening contrast because the Hungarian minority's systemic position has been crucially different. The indigenous Hungarian-speaking population has, since 1921, been an impoverished peasantry with little political organization and no dominant economic role, situated within an industrialized core state. Here, the state's imposition of German in education and administration over the same 60-odd years has coincided with upward mobility for Hungarians through that language, rendering it the symbol of high status and prestige for Hungarian speakers. It has entered Hungarian conversations as a symbolic claim to authority, from the top.⁹

A further example is provided by the currently divergent evaluations of the two minority languages, Hungarian and German, in the respective groups. Both carry connotations of in-group solidarity. But the postwar political bifurcation of Europe into Eastern and Western camps, and the much longer-standing differences in economic development that closely parallel it, have contributed simultaneously to the devaluation and "uselessness" of Hungarian in Burgenland;

and in Transylvania, on the other side of the divide, to the opposite result: a new use and value for German.

Finally, as the juxtaposition of all three examples shows, the postwar industrialization of these formerly agrarian groups has had quite different effects on linguistic evaluations and practices. Certainly, intimate mixture of the two languages, as in the Italian case, is linked only to some contexts of industrialization. Further comparisons are necessary, but continued migration and lack of upward mobility through linguistic assimilation emerge here as important structural factors contributing to this pattern. Continuing mobility itself depends on the timing of each group's entry into the region's industrial development, and the effect of movement into industry, as noted above, is conditioned by the group's previous economic position.¹⁰

Yet such systemic processes are also constrained by local historical contingencies and enhanced or subverted by locally constructed practices. The evidence presented here suggests that patterns of language use are not simply a reflex of the group's political and economic position. They are part of the group's actively constructed and often oppositional response to that position. The response emerges from internal conflict in all three groups and is often contradictory, even self-defeating, in its effects. The pressures exerted by state-supported ideologies and policies provide an example. In the face of hostile public discourses—racism, historical revisionism, strident state nationalism—that diminish or challenge the group's language and identity while celebrating the dominant language and culture, each of these groups has constructed a linguistic strategy that can be read as symbolic resistance, formed in part around the value of group solidarity. But the strategy and its local meaning are notably different in each case.

The Italian young people, with their stagnant economic position and ambiguous legal status, use their bilingual repertoire to create a syncretic form of conversation that continually includes the stream of newcomers, but symbolically rejects both alternatives offered to them by the state: integration into German society and repatriation to Italy. This genuinely novel form is not only symbolic of a newly forming social entity; it is instrumental in creating it. The Hungarian-speaking young people of Burgenland present another kind of example. Resisting institutional and informal pressures to abandon Hungarian altogether, they have continued using Hungarian, in response to counterpressures for solidarity within the community. But as a result of this dual pressure they are reducing Hungarian both symbolically and structurally to a solidarity code, leaving German uncontested as the language of public life and of authority even within their own conversations. By their own actions, the language they deem only "local" and economically "useless" is increasingly becoming so. Finally, the Germans of Transylvania attempt to maintain the minority language, separate and superior to Romanian. This is not only a remnant of their historical dominance. It is a resistance to current Romanian nationalism through ethnic solidarity but is also, paradoxically, the symbol and a major instrument of emigration out of that solidary minority.

For sociolinguistics, the explanation of differences in codeswitching practices across case studies is as important as understanding the underlying semiotic unity. A comparative perspective is essential for both goals. I have suggested that comparisons framed within a systemic view of political economy offer logical advantages, allowing a unified account of divergent linguistic practices in specific world regions. Within such a context, sociolinguistic evidence reveals forms of consciousness: the diverse local responses linguistic groups construct to cultural domination.

notes

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¹Two strands of ethnographic research have attempted to describe empirically the links between culture and political economy. One, focused on cultural aspects of class relations in the metropole or capitalist "core," is well represented by Willis' (1977) compelling ethnographic description of the contradictions of English working-class culture. The other, attending to local responses to the global expansion of capitalism, is represented in the European literature by, for instance, Schneider and Schneider's (1976) suggestive discussion of Sicilian cultural codes as historical responses to Sicily's peripheral position in the world system. Both provide stimulating models for the integration of sociolinguistic evidence with a neo-Marxist theoretical stance toward culture and political economy.

²Such an approach implies, of course, that language practices change historically, in some specifiable relation to political-economic changes, (see, for example, Gal 1979:Ch. 6). However, detailed historical evidence about language use is rarely available, making comparative studies even more valuable for understanding the relationship.

³"Ethnicity" is the term used most within scholarly and popular discourse in the United States; "nationality" or "national minority" is more common in the European context for a related but not identical political-cultural conception. For convenience I will use these interchangeably, along with "language group" or "language minority" to designate the three groups to be compared.

⁴A collection of articles edited by Monica Heller (in press) gives a good overview of the worldwide variation within what is usually termed codeswitching. Blom and Gumperz (1972) provided a classic discussion of more and less compartmentalized codes.

⁵In recent years relations between Austria and Hungary have improved considerably, encouraging commercial, tourist, and scholarly exchanges. Austrian minority policy has also changed, with increases in bilingual education, in part due to pressure from the larger language minorities in Austria.

⁶Transylvania's Germans, numbering about 300,000, are divided into those of Saxon and Swabian origins. According to several ethnographers, however, these distinctions have made little difference in ethnic relations during the last century. The ethnographic and sociolinguistic descriptions used for this section are of three different German-Romanian villages, two Saxon, one Swabian. There are few discrepancies between them.

⁷The association of Romanian with jokes is in direct contrast to numerous reports in which the home language of minorities is felt by them to be the more appropriate and effective medium for humor (see examples in Dorian 1981:78). The contrast underscores the importance for such judgments of specific local ethnic stereotypes and the material conditions from which they are constructed.

⁸This focus on the interstate system does not conflict with the emphasis in recent community studies on social networks to explain differences in usage. Local networks are clearly instrumental in maintaining values and patterns of use, as the Burgenland and Konstanz examples demonstrate. They also explain microvariations within communities that this paper does not address. But networks must also be located in a larger context of possibilities. For example, in both Transylvania and Konstanz, parents can actively manipulate their children's networks, sending them to live with relations or at schools where they will be exposed to different linguistic usage and evaluations.

⁹To understand more precisely when—in what systemic and historical circumstances—institutional support fails to assure the state language higher status than that of an ethnic minority, further comparisons are essential. This is an important issue raised by Woolard (1985), whose example of Catalan in Barcelona is illuminating. Although their histories diverge significantly, especially since World War II, the Catalans of Spain and the Germans of Transylvania have had structurally similar positions. Historically, both have been privileged and economically dominant groups within relatively underdeveloped states in the European periphery. Although current circumstances (and current linguistic practices) differ, a partial parallel is suggestive: As Woolard shows, in Barcelona the institutional dominance of Castilian during many decades did not destroy the prestige and authority of Catalan, based on the continuing economic power of Catalans in everyday life. Sociolinguistic parallels abound for all three cases discussed here, both within Europe and elsewhere (see Hill 1983 for North American examples). However, my argument is that the significance of the similarities cannot be understood without parallel analyses of the sociological and political-economic contexts.

¹⁰It is clear from the comparison of the three groups discussed in this paper that the social explanations of differences between codeswitching patterns must be more complex than dichotomies repeatedly suggested in the literature, such as urban/rural, immigrant/settled, or metropolitan/colonial. These cases also fail to support the notion that intimate juxtaposition of languages within conversations or within turns is explicable as a necessary developmental step following compartmentalized use, on the way to language shift. Some communities, such as Oberwart, which are experiencing language shift, never engage in such

intimate mixing of codes, and for other populations this kind of switching appears to be a relatively stable phenomenon. There are numerous cases of shift or language death in which conversational codeswitching plays no role at all (see Hill 1983).

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